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World Chronicle

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GUEST: **KARL THEODOR PASCHKE**
Under-Secretary-General
Office of Internal Oversight Services

JOURNALISTS: Ian Williams, *The New York Observer*
Bhaskar Menon, *The Times of India*

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INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES

KARL-THEODOR PASCHKE, Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, discusses a wide range of administrative and other issues relevant to the work of the United Nations. Guided by the General Assembly resolution creating his office, Internal Oversight Services evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization. It investigates reports of violations of United Nations rules and regulations and advises the Secretary-General on jurisdictional and disciplinary action to be taken. Mr. Paschke notes that the world organization has grown for 50 years without pruning and is consequently 10 to 15 percent overstaffed. This overstaffing can be reduced by attrition through retirement and buyout packages. He suggests more communication among under-secretaries-general to coordinate and improve the performance of the different departments.

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ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

In response to demands to bring the administration of the United Nations into line with modern practice, the General Assembly recently created an important new office -- the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

Our guest today, Under-Secretary-General Karl Theodor Paschke, was recently appointed to head this Office. In this capacity he reports directly to the General Assembly through the Secretary-General on a wide range of financial and administrative matters. Mr. Paschke is not new to this type of work. He was formerly the Director-General for Personnel and Management of the German Foreign Office.

Joining me to talk with Mr. Paschke are Ian Williams of *The New York Observer* and Bhaskar Menon of *The Times of India*. Mr. Paschke, welcome to World Chronicle.

Mr. Paschke, you're the sort of super watchdog of the United Nations, and it seems that this Office was created largely at the urging of the United States, which was not happy with the way that the taxpayers' -- not only American taxpayers, but taxpayers all over the world -- money was being used by the United Nations. Since you came on board -- in November '94, I believe -- have you found things to be in such a bad state as the American delegation seemed to imply?

PASCHKE: I would certainly take issue with the suggestion that the United Nations is an organization rotten to the core. I think that the United Nations is an organization which is run by a large majority of very dedicated people who are hard working and who work with professional expertise. What the United Nations seems to be, however -- and on this I agree with some of the critics -- is a not particularly well-managed organization. I think there are a lot of deficiencies in the management culture of the Organization, and there are many reasons for that. I guess the fact that the Organization has grown unpruned, or rather the system has grown unpruned for the last 50 years, the fact that it is a multicultural organization that has to integrate into one type of management system people from all four corners of the world who bring their different philosophies, their different approaches of public service to the Organization -- all this is, I think, responsible for a weakly-managed organization. And that, I think, has to be addressed. And my Office has a very large role to play in this.

LITTLEJOHNS: You mentioned the dedication of the staff, but observing some of the staff in this building, one sees them wandering around, in and out of the cafeteria -- there seems to be a great deal of time spent in the UN cafeteria; people

wander around carrying little files, making themselves look important, but apparently not doing a lot of work. Is the UN under-worked, would you say? The Secretariat, I mean.

PASCHKE: There are parts of the Secretariat that are clearly over-worked and under-staffed. Others I suppose are over-staffed and under-worked. And what I also find critical, and what must be addressed, is the fact that the procedures in the Organization are awkward -- the procedures that also, of course, boil down to carrying papers from one office to the next. I think we have not yet made good use of cc:mail; the electronic equipment that is at our disposal in today's world is not used fully; and very generally speaking procedures in this building and throughout the system are awkward and tedious. And many things can be done about that.

MENON: You've been in the UN now for a number of months. Is that enough time for you to make any kind of comparison between the bureaucracy that you know, which is the German one, and the UN? How would you compare the two?

PASCHKE: Well, I definitely believe that the UN is slower moving. As I said, there may be reasons for this, but I think it could be improved. And there are a number of ways to do this. I don't think one would start with dramatic actions; I think what the Organization particularly needs is a functioning internal oversight mechanism.

LITTLEJOHNS: Which is you.

PASCHKE: Which is my job. And I understand, I think correctly, the resolution which established my Office in giving me this mandate. Now, again, I don't think that my Office is called upon to act dramatically as a grand inquisitor, or, as you have suggested in your introduction, to act as a super watchdog, to do something spectacular every day. No, I think my Office is particularly mandated to install a credible, continuous oversight mechanism through the functions that indeed form such internal control or internal oversight. I'm speaking about auditing, inspections, and so on.

MENON: But you know, the American conception of the Office was that it would be a kind of new broom. From the way you're speaking now and from what you said to the Budget Committee of the General Assembly -- you said you would work through consensus, that you would work within the system. I don't think that's what the Americans meant, if you listen to what they said.

PASCHKE: Well, I'm optimistic that the results of the work which I hope we will be showing in the next few months, but also the fact that indeed this internal oversight mechanism will become more credible than it was in the past, will act as a deterrent and will have a beneficial effect on the organizational side of this outfit here. I really hope that I will be able to convey to all the constituents that are there -- and of course the United States is just one of the Member States, although of course the most

powerful and influential one -- that the perception that I have of the work is probably, in the long term, the better one. You speak about consensus. Well, as we all know, the UN is based on consensus-seeking and consensus-making. I think my Office should, at least as this is concerned, try to play the game. In other words, we will have better results if we convince people of what we are doing and if we make them understand that what we request them to do is in their own interest rather than being terribly controversial and frustrating people to the point that they then really cease to perform well.

WILLIAMS: As well as being sort of inquisitor general in American terms, do you see a role for yourself as a kind of ombudsman for the staff? Because one of the problems in the UN system is that they are outside of any legal system. To give you an example, late last year several members of the staff were disciplined even though the Joint Disciplinary Committee had said that they were totally innocent, that they should not be disciplined, and that the cases in fact shouldn't have been brought against them -- by the predecessor to your Office, in fact. And yet these people were disciplined. One would have thought that here is a case in which, in an outside jurisdiction, those people would have been able to go straight to a judge and get the discipline overturned on the grounds of breach of natural justice. Do you see a role for yourself in representing the staff against administrative and bureaucratic management practices?

PASCHKE: Well, first of all, if the Member States had intended to create an ombudsman, they would have done so. They created an Office of Internal Oversight Service. And I am, of course, guided by the resolution that established my Office. One important element of this newly established office, however, is that it listens to input from staff, management, whomever.

WILLIAMS: You still have an anonymous phone line, do you?

PASCHKE: Well, we have a hotline that is not necessarily anonymous. It provides anonymity if someone chooses to stay anonymous. But it is the mechanism that allows anybody who so desires to give an input with either requests, suggestions, criticism, even accusation of wrongdoing.

WILLIAMS: But the point I'm trying to make is, is this just financial wrongdoing? For example, the type of cases which we've had in the UN: There have been allegations of sexual harassment on the part of senior management, and the victims in these cases have always had considerable difficulty because their channel of complaint is usually through the person they're alleging is the harasser. I mean, could a woman, or as has happened here, even a young man who's been harassed, call your Office and try to bring this to your attention as a management fault?

MENON: And how would that affect your attempt to work with consensus, through consensus, with precisely the managers you have to discipline?

PASCHKE: Yes. Now, first of all, let me say that as the nature of a hotline has it, every input is accepted. The question then is what is done with it. And my tendency for cases of sexual harassment is to channel them to the proper authority, which in my view is first and foremost the Office of Human Resources Management. However, I think my role in trying to improve the management of the Organization and to improve the overall performance also has to do with problems that staff seem to have and bring to my attention. So I will not exclude that in cases of sexual harassment I might somehow become involved. And as a matter of fact, as you know, there is a task force to address this particular problem right now, which is trying to come up with some new mechanisms to fight sexual harassment, and I have joined in the discussion of this problem, and I will continue to do so.

LITTLEJOHNS: How serious is the problem of sexual harassment, would you say, in the UN? There's a tremendous number of women in the Organization, and most of the men -- well, many of the men, at any rate -- are in capacities where the women are their subordinates, so they're in a position of power. Is this a real problem?

PASCHKE: I really don't know how to answer that question. I think if we have one case it is a serious problem. But I really cannot answer your question -- what dimension this problem has. I have spoken to people, and people have spoken to me, who have suggested that it is rampant in the Organization; others, very serious people who know the UN from the inside, have told me this is not the case. I really am too new to the Organization to have a sound judgement on the dimension of the problem. But I find it is a serious problem and it really is not a problem that can only be judged as far as the numbers of cases are concerned.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is World Chronicle, our guest is Karl Theodor Paschke, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services.

WILLIAMS: One of the problems the UN has always had is lack of career training. People come, as you say, from all parts of the world and they're put into offices where they're all supposed to work together. Yet there's no system, there's not much training -- in fact, very little training. No career path is planned out for people. Your own Office suffers from this. You've got a grab-bag of people whom you've had absolutely no hand in selecting, who have no background in investigation. Many of them really don't know what they're supposed to be doing. How are you going to deal with this?

PASCHKE: I'm glad you asked this question, because I really want to confirm to you that in my view there is a deplorable lack of administrative expertise in the Organization, and it can only be addressed by proper training. Where I come from, I have been involved for many years in management training, and I want to put this experience to good use. I have already teamed up with the Department of Administration and Management, I have spoken to the Secretary-General about ideas that I have in this respect, and I am optimistic that we will be able to bring about a system of management training which, in my view, has to be done from top to bottom. In other words, it would have to involve all the department heads and go on down from there.

MENON: What timeframe are you talking about?

PASCHKE: I would hope that in the next two years we will be able to come up with a good programme, in other words, a programme that would cover the next two years and make an impact on the Organization. I think that that is very, very important. Now, I said something about the general diagnosis of under-developed administrative expertise; you addressed my Office in particular, and in particular the investigation part of it. Yes, it is true that we do not have, since it has never existed in the United Nations, an investigation culture. This has to put on the map. And there again I will have to rely on outside resources for appropriate training, and I will also have to bring aboard fresh blood. I intend to do that, and I hope we will be able to set up credible procedures, a manual, a book that explains how we are going to go about our work. But all of this needs some time. I hope that I will be given that time.

MENON: How free a hand do you have in appointing staff from outside?

PASCHKE: The resolution which established my Office gives me operational independence, and this includes also a mechanism by which I would be able to appoint, promote and terminate staff for OIOS. Of course, we had to develop the procedure in itself; we have done so in the past few weeks. We are going to have this in place shortly, and then we will proceed accordingly.

WILLIAMS: At the moment, though, you've inherited the old staff of the department who many of us consider did not exactly cover themselves in glory in the past. I mean, at the moment, you haven't appointed your own staff yet, you've inherited your predecessor's.

PASCHKE: No, I couldn't. As I just said, I will have to have the procedure in place. But let me be very clear about this. What I said at the outset about the quality of staff also applies to the Office that I head. I have spoken individually with every staff member, and the impression I got was that, indeed, we have dedicated and hard-working

people here, along with some who may not be so dedicated and hard-working. But I really want to underline that the existing resources, as the resolution always puts it, the existing resources with which I work are a very good starting point.

WILLIAMS: One of the things -- you were mentioning about the type of culture here -- one of the things that other people have seemed to notice in the United Nations is a sort of lack of an accountability culture, in the sense that decisions are made and no one -- I think the classic example was the recent scrapping of several billion dollars' worth of electronic control equipment at the gates, and nobody seems to remember who exactly ordered it, who planned it, why it was wrong, who didn't check it. And the whole chain of command has sort of dissolved into a delta, a marshland, where no one can pin down anyone who had anything to do with this rather large loss-making enterprise.

PASCHKE: Well, this case which you allude to is still under investigation from our Office. So there will be a report, a report will be made.

MENON: One of the things you're talking about in management is the major computer system that's now been trundling along for ten years -- I think it's probably still using abacuses it's so old -- as people keep pumping millions in trying to get it working.

PASCHKE: Yes --

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Paschke, what about staff management relations in general? Would you say that the staff have had the fear of God put in them by the creation of your Office? And also, what about your relations with the Secretary-General? I mean, your term actually goes beyond the term of the Secretary-General, and you cannot be fired except by the General Assembly -- God forbid that that should happen. I mean, you're a very powerful man in this building. Has this been reflected in the relations between staff and management?

PASCHKE: Well, let me address first the second part of your question, which deas with my relationship with the Secretary-General. I have already had several long and in-depth conversations with the Secretary-General about the work that I do and the intentions I pursue, I found him to be very understanding and very supportive, and I have every confidence that this will continue to be the case. When he came into office, I think he clearly stated that he was also interested in a better-managed UN. I suppose that, over the years, or the last few dramatic years when the UN has been simply overwhelmed by the onslaught of very, very important and yet very new tasks, the efforts to improve the management have been, well, been a little bit on the back burner. And maybe the creation of my Office will contribute to putting them back on the front burner.

Now, the other question that you asked, management-staff relations --

LITTLEJOHNS: Didn't you recommend that 15 or 20 per cent of the staff should be dispensed with, or something to that effect?

PASCHKE: I said, somewhere in an interview, that I believe that there is some element of over-staffing in the Organization, and I think 10 to 15 per cent of the staff could be cut. But when I say "cut", I'm talking about a buy-out programme. I don't advocate a cut that would send people out on the street, I'm talking about an early retirement programme. And I know that the Department of Administration and Management is planning along these lines, and they have my full support in that.

WILLIAMS: Is one of the problems with a buy-out programme the fact that often it's the people who are enterprising and could get a job outside who leave, and the people who are left are the ones who would be hopeless in the real world? So the dead-wood stays and the live-wood goes.

PASCHKE: Well, I don't suggest that it is easy to bring about such a programme, and I don't suggest that the picture you just painted is totally unrealistic. But obviously the discretion as to whom to buy out and whom not to buy out rests with the Department of Administration and Management.

MENON: But Mr. Paschke, didn't you mention, in an interview a few weeks ago, that entire units or programmes could be cut, like UNIDO and UNCTAD? Which then of course had to be clarified. What was that about?

PASCHKE: Well, I certainly did not suggest this, and I think the uproar that was caused was not caused by the interview itself but by an agency ticker that announced the publication of this interview and suggested that I had said this.

MENON: And you hadn't actually said it.

PASCHKE: I had not said that UNIDO or UNCTAD should be abolished, no way. But I said that the UN system -- and I'm repeating myself -- had grown without any pruning for 50 years, and that every now and then, more often than not, new organizations had been added to the system without ever asking the question, by this new organization, is the mandate of an old one perhaps affected? Has it become obsolete? I also believe -- and I mentioned this in a different context -- that the UN environment has undergone dramatic change, particularly over the last few years, so that the entire system is called upon to rethink its mandates, to rethink its missions.

MENON: Could I take that point one step further? As a journalist, I've always been impressed at how little importance is given to communication, both within the house and from the house to its outside audience. Do you consider this an important

aspect of your work, actually getting staff to communicate with each other in staff-management communications?

PASCHKE: Well, first of all, I think, although this house -- and I'm now speaking of the Secretariat -- produces an enormous amount of paper, the horizontal flow of information between different departments is very deficient. I have noticed that I have not yet had many opportunities to learn directly from my colleagues, the other department heads, what they are doing and what their priorities are, what their individual tasks are at this particular moment. So one of the things that I would want to suggest is that we have more communication horizontally.

MENON: How are you going to do that?

PASCHKE: Well, there could be regular meetings of the USGs, the ASGs --

LITTLEJOHNS: I thought there were.

PASCHKE: There are, but they are always focused on one particular item, whereas I advocate a regular exchange where the USGs would sit together and would speak to each other about the things that are foremost on their minds, thereby creating a common knowledge of what the Organization is doing and what the priorities of the Organization are at any given moment.

Now, let me also address the question of communication between management and staff. Yes, I do believe that one of the imperative messages of a top management course would be that there should be more communication between management and staff.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Paschke, on that note I'm afraid we have to call it a day. That's all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle**. Our guest has been Karl Theodor Paschke, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services. He was interviewed by Ian Williams of *The New York Observer* and Bhaskar Menon of *The Times of India*. I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

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